

The Youngsters' Best Friend

*Fifteen Days of Prayer
with Blessed Daniel Brottier CSSp*

Alphonse Gilbert CSSp

*Translated from the French by
Joseph D'Ambrosio CSSp, Ph.L*

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with
Blessed Daniel Brottier CSSp

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by Fr. Alphonse Gilbert CSSp

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Dedication

*This book is dedicated to
Brian Fulton CSSp (Scotland)
who died in Asia on February 2 2006,
representing Daniel Brottier's Orphanage in Auteuil,
at the age of 57.*

Favours Received

If you receive any favours from God through praying to Blessed Daniel Brottier CSSp, please inform:

Rev. Father Provincial CSSp,
Holy Ghost Provincialate,
Temple Park,
Richmond Avenue South,
Dublin 6,
Ireland.

Your testimony may help in Blessed Daniel Brottier's eventual canonisation.

Table of CONTENTS

	INTRODUCTION	9
DAY ONE	THE OFFERING OF HIS LIFE	15
DAY TWO	AN EFFECTIVE COMMITMENT	21
DAY THREE	OBSTACLES	27
DAY FOUR	LOVE IN ACTION	33
DAY FIVE	PURIFICATION OF SPIRIT	39
DAY SIX	UNITING CONTEMPLATION AND ACTION	45
DAY SEVEN	BE ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE	51
DAY EIGHT	FOR THE GLORY OF THE MASTER	57
DAY NINE	SPIRITUAL POVERTY	63
DAY TEN	TEAMWORK	69
DAY ELEVEN	TRUST IN PROVIDENCE	75
DAY TWELVE	LOVING SERVICE	81
DAY THIRTEEN	DOCILITY TO THE SPIRIT	87
DAY FOURTEEN	RADIATING GOODNESS	93
DAY FIFTEEN	THE CROSS AND THE GLORY	99



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INTRODUCTION

Daniel Brottier was born on 7th September 1876 at Ferte Saint Cyr in the diocese of Blois in France. His family lived in a little cottage in the grounds of the country house belonging to the Durfort family, and his father was coachman to the landlord.

On the day of his First Communion at the age of eleven, he realised during a “true heart to heart talk with Jesus” that he was called to become a priest. He entered the Junior Seminary of Blois at the beginning of the following school year. When he was there one year, he heard a talk on the foreign missions and felt an intense desire to dedicate himself to that life. When he was sixteen he entered the Senior Seminary, and was ordained priest at the age of twenty-three.

He immediately wished to enter a missionary order. However, the Bishop of Blois would have none of it, and in view of his exceptional qualities as a teacher, told him to work in a college for the next five years. It was only on 26th September 1902, that he finally managed to start in the novitiate in the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (Holy Ghost Fathers) at Orly near Paris. One year later, he consecrated himself to the work of the apostolate. He was appointed to Saint Louis in Senegal.

From the moment of his arrival in Africa, he worked flat out. The Combes Law, of the French Government, at that time enforced the secularisation of all schools and hospitals. His previous work as an educator had prepared the young

Fr. Brottier to take up the challenge: his appointment was providential. Unfortunately his health broke down because of his excess of zeal; he had to return to metropolitan France after only three and a half years in Africa.

On his return, he found out that false accusations had gone on ahead of him, and that he was threatened with expulsion from his order. The new superior defended him and he got down to work with more zeal even than before! But a doubt kept gnawing at his heart: was he really meant to be occupied with all this work? Was he not rather invited by his Divine Master to live the silence of the cloister in a monastery? He received his reply from the Abbey of Lerins to which he had applied: his calling was instead to spend his apostolate in activity. The Bishop of Dakar then asked him to collect donations in France for the building of the cathedral in Dakar, which was to be known as “The African Memorial”, *“le Souvenir Africain”*.

World War broke out in August 1914, Daniel Brottier was not fit enough to be mobilised. But how could he stay a stranger to the terrible events of the day? He took part in the creation of a corps of voluntary chaplains, joined the group himself, and brought with him into it hundreds of religious priests. He always tried to make sure he was on the front line at the constant risk of his life; he was not even wounded, and was known as “The Legendary Chaplain”. In the middle of it all, in 1917, he founded the National Union of Combatants to be a mutual aid society for ex-soldiers once the war was over.

On his return to Paris after the war, he got down to organising this work. Because of his competence, and indeed his fame, all doors were opened to him! And all the time he continued to beg for money for the cathedral in Dakar. He

INTRODUCTION

would willingly have returned there but the state of his health prevented it. During those days he heard of the shipwreck of the ship carrying the Bishop of Dakar and eighteen of his fellow missionaries on their way back to Africa. Daniel Brottier felt devastated and useless . . . what were they going to do with him? Where was all the heroism he showed at the Front now that he was in the midst of a daily routine?

Suddenly St. Thérèse of Lisieux entered his life. On his return from the war, Daniel learned that his bishop had prayed for his miraculous preservation from death or injury to a little Carmelite nun, and that he had done this daily for the four terrible years of the war. Daniel immediately got down to reading the *Story of a Soul*, the life of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus, and realised straight away that they were both twin souls. From then on he was to go forward hand in hand with Thérèse, both in the intimacy of his heart and openly in the courage of his actions: he would be a contemplative in the middle of all his activity!

On 21st November 1923, Brottier became Director of the Orphan Apprentices of Auteuil in Paris. This project had been founded by Fr Roussel, but was going steadily downhill due to financial problems. Daniel felt called to radiate the infinite tenderness of God for those unfortunate orphan boys and girls whom nobody loved. From now on it was obvious he was totally engaged in the service of children in distress whom he was going to benefit with a first class education.

The situation in the Home for Apprentice Orphans was more or less catastrophic but Fr. Brottier openly manifested an unbelievable optimism. Here he was, setting off in the company of St. Thérèse. Right away he got down to

constructing a little basilica in her honour in Auteuil, and for her part, she would be the "little mother", of the children. What a beautiful story of love . . . completely of course undertaken for the glory of the Master.

Daniel spent the rest of his life totally convinced that God was present in this work which He wished to see completed, and for which He had long since been preparing Daniel. The donations arrived in overwhelming amounts. He was able to make himself an apostle for the poor, because he himself had the heart of a poor man: and he felt that this is what he had really been called for.

Everyone who found themselves working with him in the Homes of Auteuil recognised that he had mastered the art on every level of fraternal collaboration. This enabled him to get built so easily the large and beautiful basilica dedicated to Therésè, and to take part in the construction at a great distance of the Cathedral of Dakar, while all the time the number of Homes of Auteuil was growing. He made sure everyone knew all about this through the press and through public subscriptions.

Providence is the Love of God at work in our lives. That idea was the solid foundation for his apostolic activity. Everything was bound up with the conviction that Providence presides over all the events of our existence since that is where we work out the beautiful adventure of our eternity.

"Open the door for him", was the slogan on the poster showing a homeless youngster standing in the street before the barred gates. This cry from the heart is what incited benefactors and friends, who became daily more numerous. He made of himself a beggar of love for the young victims of a society which had been turned upside down. A massive

INTRODUCTION

number of good Samaritans rose up in response to his appeal. They were known as “The Heart of Auteuil”, because all these men and women, by prayer, suffering and generosity, promoted the life of the entire project.

“God’s Spirit has sent me to preach the good news to the poor” (Luke 4:18). Fr. Brottier allowed himself to be led by the Spirit who creates in us “the desire and the action” (Phil. 2:3). In one simple movement the Holy Spirit enabled his apostle to grow in intimacy with the Divine, and immerse himself with others in the mission of the Church.

Soon there shone out from him a dazzling goodness, above all towards the poor, the little ones, those who were regarded as troublesome in any way. The adjective stuck to him, “Brottier the Good”.

The real merit of Daniel was that he achieved all he did while suffering from atrocious constant headaches. To these pains of the body were added temptations against virtue. Finally, when the moment came for him to return to Dakar for the opening of his beloved cathedral, he was too sick to go and remained in Paris with “his children”. On 15th February, he was brought to the hospital of St. Joseph. He died there during the night of 28th February 1936, under the motherly protection of Mary. Right to the end, he had wished to participate in the sufferings of Christ in order to be a co-redeemer with Him of those who were his. With Jesus also, he was glorified in the splendour of his beatification, which took place in Rome, on 25th November 1984, in the Pontificate of Pope John Paul II.

Every Christian, no matter his state in life, is called by the fact of his Baptism to be an apostle, a witness to Jesus Christ before men and women, both in his own person and in his activity. Some people live this calling more profoundly and

draw us after them: these are the saints of God. Fr. Brottier is one of them.

To pray fifteen days with Blessed Daniel Brottier means that in spending time in his company, we are making apostles of ourselves, in order to act as he acted.

In every stage of his extremely active life, there gleams one after the other fifteen facets of his impressive sanctity. They reflect the essential aspects of the journey of his apostolic life and introduce us to prayer:

- 1) The fundamental disposition of offering one's life to God
- 2) Search for efficacious methods
- 3) Obstacles - how to deal with them
- 4) Charity in action
- 5) Purification
- 6) The art of uniting contemplation and activity
- 7) The ability to be all things to all, men, women and children
- 8) God comes first
- 9) Spiritual poverty
- 10) A spirit of teamwork
- 11) Complete trust in Divine Providence
- 12) A common service of love
- 13) Openness to the Spirit of Pentecost
- 14) Radiating goodness
- 15) Undergoing the Cross, enjoying the victory

This is the route which Jesus Himself first of all traced out for us, as the mysterious source of the greatest happiness for his disciples.

Day One

THE OFFERING OF HIS LIFE

*Pont Levoy,
6th June 1902*

"Dear Reverend Father,

Your letter has arrived, and has removed all doubt about what I should do. From now on the doubt has ended . . . I had not realised that it would have been so difficult to leave the world. When one considers what other people undergo, it seems to cost very little; but once it touches oneself personally, the situation completely alters and things appear under an altogether different light.

What consoles me most and keeps the attraction strong, is the fact that I continue to feel in the depths of my heart the same enthusiasm I had a year ago . . . I am longing to offer up my life and my blood for the spreading of the Good News . . .

If the Good God wishes to accept all that is mine for such a great work, then I give it to Him with my whole heart! It is rather ambitious I suppose, to have this desire for martyrdom, but without such, it seems to me that you cannot be a real missionary."

(Letter of Daniel Brottier to the Novice Master of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit).

Fr. Daniel Brottier, who had been a priest in the Diocese of Blois since October 1899 and had been a professor and dean of discipline in the college of Pont Levoy, felt in his heart an insistent call to the Missions. But in order to realise this

apostolic ideal which he had caught a glimpse of at the age of twelve, he had to confront the opposition of his bishop, the anger of his brother, the pain of his parents, and his own fears. He wrote to his brother and sister-in-law, "If mere happiness here below is to be the sum total of all our efforts, then my ambition is obviously senseless. But the sacrifices which we make now are seeds of glory and happiness for the life to come, and that should be our overwhelming consideration. That does not mean that we do not suffer when we are making these sacrifices, but when the good God calls, one has to march onward cost what it may. This pain by itself would be nothing, but I am conscious that I am making those whom I love to suffer, especially our good parents. However I have every confidence that the good God, who never allows Himself to be outdone in generosity, will take note of such great sacrifices undertaken solely out of love for Him, and that He will give all of us the consolation of knowing that we have done our duty in something very worthwhile."

He had scarcely been given his liberty by the Bishop of Blois when the diocesan office informed him that he was appointed parish priest of Saint Rimay. He was stupefied! Obviously the bishop did not want to lose him and this was his final attempt in the struggle to keep him. Once again Daniel abandoned himself to Divine Providence. And he once again received a clear sign of what to do: his father confessor, the superior of the seminary, and the master of novices swept his doubts aside without a moment's hesitation! How joyful to be able to march forward in faith, receiving confirmation of his desires from clear signs that divine Providence was at work.

Daniel went so far as to ask God to allot a greater share of suffering to him, if that were necessary so that his parents would have less to undergo. What can be more sorrowful than to see the grief of those who are most dear to us and to feel that, all unwillingly, one is the cause of their pain? In spite of himself a certain feeling of guilt ate into his bones, focussing particularly on his father, who was always more reticent than his mother.

But behind this interior battle, his immense love for Christ stood firm. "I know to whom I have given my life", he said with St. Paul, "he who loved me and gave himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20). For Daniel also, to love meant to offer his life. Surely it is easier to give oneself to the Missions than to undergo this martyrdom of the heart? He abandoned himself with complete confidence to the one who made him part of His own sacrifice, and he allowed himself to be flooded with His love.

This is frequently the path trodden by every Christian who desires to be a witness of the Lord in the circumstances where he finds himself and in the state of life which is his. The starting point is an interior experience of love for Jesus which shows itself in an overwhelming desire to see Him known and loved. There is no lack of obstacles, they are all about us, for "a prophet is not recognised in his own country", but the grace of God accompanies and fortifies the man or woman who is prepared to give up everything for the Lord. Then the Holy Spirit pours out his light in one's mind, in order to guide his apostle towards an authentic witness, according to the eternal plan God has for him. At least that is what happened to Daniel Brottier.

Daniel's letter of application for profession and consecration to the apostolate is preserved in the archives of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. It is a confidential document which throws light on his depth of spirit. It contains a fundamental response of availability which he wished to offer as a gift to God. His personal mystery - about which he was always very discreet - can be summed up in two words: God's seizure of him and his voluntary gift of his person to God for the project He had in mind. It was a complete and definitive self-giving: with total generosity he handed over to God, for the most beautiful of causes, the flower of his youth.

"Right Reverend and Dear Bishop,

I am a priest, I am twenty-seven years old, and I only have a little good will . . . I believe that I have understood the full extent of the obligations of religious life in the Congregation. Charity above all, simplicity, blind obedience . . . As regards missionary life, I have always envisaged it since the age of twelve, as the life of a man who wishes to sacrifice himself, for the salvation of souls, whether right away or drop by drop, it matters little! If however I may be permitted to express a preference, I would like it to be immediate . . . I do not wish to be presumptuous but if you happen to have a really dangerous posting where someone's life needs to be risked, then I simply say to you, 'Here I am!'. The blood of the missioner is the seed of Christians!"

This "here I am", is then the expression which sums up, when everything is taken into consideration, the fundamental attitude of the apostle, man or woman: the generous giving of oneself, in response to the love which God has first of all shown us. It is like the "here I am" of

DAY ONE - THE OFFERING OF HIS LIFE

Abraham at Beersheba, like the “here I am” of Moses at the Burning Bush, like the “here I am, send me” of Isaiah when he saw God revealed; it is a complete handing over of oneself to the good pleasure of God, a joyful choice of apostolate, shown by “loving until the end”. The “here I am” makes itself heard in the depths of the heart; it lives out its existence concretely down all the days of one’s life, sometimes in searching, sometimes in suffering, but always with the interior illumination of the first calling, the constant remembrance of which brings one to respond to love by love. This offering follows that made by Christ when he first entered into the world: “Here I am, O God, I have come to do Your Will . . . ” (Heb. 10:7).

Prayer

Dear Father Brottier,

You have lived out this “here I am” with all the generous ardour of your love for Christ. I also feel that I am called to find true happiness in the total donation of myself like Jesus. With you, I ask Him to help me to overcome the obstacles which lie in my way, in order to become, in every atom of my being, a true witness to Him “Who first of all loved me” (1 John 4: 19).

Day Two

AN EFFECTIVE COMMITMENT

*Saint Louis,
Senegal*

Dear Marquis de Durfort,

Just as in France, the persecution of the Church has hit us here very hard. The Government has secularised without exception all the schools and hospitals run until now by the Brothers and the Sisters. In such circumstances we have to adopt any means we can, continually chasing up the youngsters whom we have no intention of abandoning into the hands of the enemy. The good God, as far as we can see, seems to be blessing our efforts: we have a very flourishing youth apostolate . . . I hope that the opposition will not continue much longer, but the signs are not promising. The Governor has forced us already to close a local site which some benefactor had placed at my disposal to create a playground for the youngsters. This is of course a violation of the rights of property, and although we are not inclined to make an issue of it, we wonder where it will all end.

So you can see, that here just as in France it is difficult to achieve much good. Nevertheless, we are still walking on the right road.

I myself am in good health, despite the torrid heat. I trust that the good God will give me the strength to continue the work I have begun.

Daniel Brottier.

The Marquis of Durfort of Ferte Saint Cyr had become Daniel's benefactor. Daniel opened himself to him in his letters about the difficulties of his apostolate. "There is so much to be done among these poor people that I wish I had a million lives to spend for their salvation . . . It is true that what we are doing is worth dying for! God's cause is one such!"

The atmosphere of persecution which had been encouraged by the Combes Laws only redoubled Brottier's zeal. He started to adopt the most effective means for educating the youth and counteracting anti-religious propaganda. He gave inflammatory talks, such as, "Does Man need Religion?" or "Must we believe only what we can understand?" He looked for a suitable patron saint to overlook his work for the youth, and found one in St Joan of Arc, patroness of his diocese of Blois. The young Moslems in his mission were allowed to participate as well. He founded a little singing group for the small children, a proper choir for the youth, and Thursday talks for the secondary school pupils in order to furnish them with a reply to ". . . the objections made by their teachers against the Faith". For the young adults he revived the Catholic Circle, which attracted them in great numbers and provided them with a library, games, a theatre group and even a refreshment area. The Moslems also came to hear Fr. Brottier's talks, ". . . on the subject of fear and on the signs for hope in the days through which we are living".

The way of teaching practised by Fr. Brottier was prophetic of his future achievements in France. His aim was to educate those who had the qualities necessary to influence others, and also those who had a personal vocation to a more

committed Christian way of life. He was practising Catholic Action before its time . . . He was just as concerned for the spiritual well being and growth of young women and girls.

A great parish event was the creation of a monthly newsletter, *The Echo of Saint Louis*. Our journalist had a sharp pen and felt himself free to comment on local happenings, as well as forming a Christian spirit among his readers. Nor did he forget a column of Christian Instruction, sometimes through the use of polemic (of which he was a master), and often with a touch of humour. "All the world understands that in such times as we are living through, we must use whatever are the best means available: the press is what is most pressing! Whoever has the press has every reason for hope! In these times of profound religious crisis, we hear on all sides, 'Nobody believes any more! The Christian spirit has disappeared!' Let us search rather for the remedy: live your religion: be the Gospel in action!" (August 1908).

In one article of *The Echo* which he initialled in order to underline his interest in the matter, in September 1910, Fr. Brottier wrote, "The youth, there lies our hope; in a parish, a strong youth group is an essential element for stability and cohesion and with it the future is assured!".

But what was lacking in all this was a parish meeting place. The Children of Mary, a group of about thirty enthusiastic young women, were set to work to organise a collection. They were sent ". . . into the world of their parents, friends, acquaintances, for a few weeks. After much visiting, revisiting, letters, repeat letters . . . in six months at the most a beautiful parish hall was constructed!" (March 1910). The Joan of Arc Hall (again the all-conquering saint) was to remain an extremely active parish centre for over sixty years!

The dedication of the hall in honour of St Joan of Arc included three days of solemn prayer in which there were sermons, choir singing and a Pontifical Mass!

To all these initiatives, Fr. Brottier added a day nursery for the very young and a vocational centre for the technical training and spiritual formation of young women. Fr Brottier had the gift of attracting people to himself, encouraging, inspiring confidence, and imparting to his male and female collaborators his own immense zeal.

Such zeal is a characteristic of the generous apostle who wants to do the best possible and to use best practice to allow the Spirit of God to operate freely. Fr Brottier took his decisions after much prayer, which was for him a long time of silence after which he was able to introduce God's project to those men and women to whom he was sent. That was how he was able to continually renew his great energy in order to, as he said, "give the best of himself".

It is the same for the modern apostle. Whether he is engaged in a Catholic Action Group, in a Renewal Group, in a parish organisation, in a work of mutual aid, the care of the poor or the service of the sick, in the multiple activities aimed at the spiritual good of people, in their material necessity, and first of all in the bosom of his own family, it is only by coming from frequent meetings of intimacy with God that his heart can open to the appeals of others. Let difficulties accumulate, no matter, for he has within him the zeal of Pentecost to enable him to witness to Christ near and far.

In the Mission of the Church, the contemporary apostle will know how to join with others in order to choose the most direct means and the wisest methods. And like Fr. Brottier, he will never be discouraged whatever the obstacles.

DAY TWO - EFFICACIOUS ZEAL

Fr. Brottier wrote to a priest friend, "Never be discouraged, as you are telling me you are, but first and foremost keep your soul and your heart looking heavenwards. Rest securely on your Faith, and on the human front, continue to look for a sympathetic patron who will open all doors through which you desire to pass".

Prayer

Dear Father Brottier,

With you I ask God to fill me with the same zeal which you had to witness to Christ, first of all by my example, and then by all sorts of different activities, from the most humble to those which take an entire lifetime. I ask the Holy Spirit, who filled the souls of the first apostles, who were so frightened in the beginning, for courage and heroic perseverance. May He breathe into me the same warmth, so that I may imitate them while using the most direct and efficacious means!

Day Three

OBSTACLES

*"I believe in God, in the soul, in immortality,
I believe in virtue; I believe in goodness,
I believe in constant effort and in austere work,
I believe in justice, life, and in mystery,
I believe in wisdom and in truth,
I believe in the good I do, and in charity,
I believe in sorrow, which saves the world,
I believe in happy deaths and in fruitful ideals,
I believe in the blood of Christ and of martyrs;
I believe! . . . "*

This profession of faith of Daniel Brottier's was written at Saint Louis in Senegal, and is to be found inside the cover of a lectionary in the abbey of Bec Hellouin. In particular, it affirms his "faith in sorrow, which saves the world". He had an especially bitter experience on his return from six months' sick leave at the beginning of 1907. Scarcely had he announced in *The Echo* the title of his next *Talks In Defence of Religion* on the subject, *Are All Religions Good?*, with the subtitle, *Is it not our duty to seek to stem the torrent of infidelity which threatens to engulf our youth?* when his Bishop, Kuneman, reacted by sending to Daniel's superior a severe letter.

He said in it that he had learned that the Governor of Senegal had refused to renew Fr. Brottier's work permit, and therefore his presence was deemed undesirable. The Bishop

wrote, "The talks Fr. Brottier is giving are far too political in nature, and instead of being a minister of peace, he is rather a firebrand spreading discord . . ." Therefore, the talks must end, *The Echo* must close down, and the activities of the Catholic Circle must stop that very evening: ". . . be good religious and you will be good missionaries. Preach the Gospel!"

Daniel was always sensitive to the good opinion of his superiors, and what hurt him most was the total lack of dialogue between himself and his bishop, the tissue of lies being spread about himself, the malicious insinuations peddled around as regards his personal life, and the implications about his lack of sincerity. He was bowled over by it all. He wrote, "A priest without a good reputation cannot do any good." He himself had never been jealous of anyone. Now he was a "sign of contradiction" (Luke 2:34).

In the silence of prayer, he gradually became conscious of another of the realities of the apostolate, the eighth beatitude proclaimed by Jesus: "Happy are you when men speak all kinds of evil about you on my account" (Matthew 5:11). Immediately he forgave his bishop, who in fact died a few months later.

A new discovery took hold of him from then on, namely, what he called in his profession of faith, "Sorrow, the world's redemptress". He saw in suffering a sharing in the cross of Jesus, and that he, Daniel, by it was also helping to save the world. Francis Libermann, the spiritual animator of the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit, described the apostolic life as "one full of love and of holiness, by which a missionary is continually sacrificed to the glory of the Father for the redemption of the world" (ND 10. 505). Up until then Daniel

had conceived of sacrifice as a readiness to give all to his Lord; now, this availability still remained, but to it was added a mysterious interior dimension, that is, to be a co-redeemer with Jesus Christ! He had wanted martyrdom from an early age and from now on it would be an offering "drop by drop" to the will of the Father: "I believe in the blood of Christ and of the martyrs!"

This is an important step on the road of apostolic life. "The crosses which we carry are pure gold, but humiliations are pearls and precious stones" wrote Libermann (ND 1. 489). Today's apostle is also invited by his Lord to serve Him by this road of unjust accusation and persecution. That is how the benefits of the resurrection are worked out with Jesus, by association with His cross. "I complete what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for His body which is the church" (Col. 1:24), wrote Saint Paul, who presented his experiences as "a thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor. 12:7). In Galatians 6:14 he wrote, "I must only find my glory in the cross of Jesus Christ, in which is salvation, life and our resurrection."

The new Bishop of Dakar, Jalabert, rehabilitated Brottier and gave him free rein to revive what Daniel called "the first shot in the fray for the triumph of Christ" (*The Echo*, 1911). When both of them departed together for France in the June of 1911, Daniel did not know that he would never return to Africa. While praying for the continent he loved so much he murmured, "I did all I could, God must do the rest".

One new question arose to harass him: could he not participate more closely in the redemption of the human race with Christ, if he was in the solitude of the cloister, rather than in the hustle and bustle of the apostolic life? All the difficulties he had recently experienced, were they not a sign

from Christ that He wished him to be a martyr “drop by drop in monastic contemplation?” Daniel wrote, “I would gladly enter a Trappist monastery, though I am also willing to return to Senegal or to another appointment where things might be better, but I am ready for anything provided that God lets me know. We can only pray and wait with resignation for our divine Master to reveal to us His will in this as in every other matter.”

The reply of his superior general was quite clear on the question. “Dear Father Brottier, you have been created for action, and it would seem to me to be a serious sin against the Holy Spirit to encourage you to tuck away behind a door the missionary gifts with which the good God has endowed you . . . Look now, Jesus chose twelve missionaries, and not one Trappist! There is something for you to think about during your retreat”.

Daniel shut himself away on the island of Lerins for a week. “I so much wish to avoid the free-for-all of daily life, to have a few moments of leisure to pray and meditate at will, and not be absorbed by a thousand and one worries and the mean tricks of other human beings”, he wrote. There he was, a long-bearded missionary in the middle of all the monks. He soon received the reply he was waiting for from heaven. “It is so intimate here. I have passed unforgettable hours of deep union with God, throughout in an atmosphere of sacrifice and immolation”. But, he continued, “After a few days I was forced to face the evidence; I am not cut out for this kind of life . . . I must return to Paris, and now without looking back I face the future whatever it may be . . . ”

His bishop had made the decision for him. He was to stay in Paris and gather donations throughout France so that the bishop could build in Dakar a church which would be at the

same time a sort of religious Pantheon to the memory of all Frenchmen who lay in Africa. This dedication made it much easier for him to solicit the necessary funds. The cathedral would be called, *Le Souvenir Africain*, the African Memorial. Daniel immediately agreed. "I must leave no stone unturned", he wrote. "I will calmly work out my plan of campaign. The only things which seem to have the possibility of success are, surprisingly, those which result from long meditation".

Prayer

Dear Father Brottier,

You are giving us also the clear message of abandonment to the divine will, in obedience. You are also letting us understand that the apostolate becomes a source of holiness when we live it in union with the one who sends us. I ask you to gain for me the light of the Holy Spirit so as to know clearly what is expected of me in my own personal situation, and so that I can get help to live it with the same generosity which you showed, and then I will become God's instrument for the cause which is His own.

Day Four

LOVE IN ACTION

"The military chaplain carries out his work behind the lines, in the dressing stations, in order to help the wounded and the dying . . . But there is need of chaplains living with the soldiers, in the front line, sharing their lives, their sufferings, their dangers, their deaths! The Combes Law wants to keep the priests in the sacristy and the chaplain in the sick bays just to bury the dead. Has not the time come for us to rejoin the human race where it actually is, to share their lot, to give them once again a Christian soul? What better missionary way of service than that? Priests 'with their rucksacks on their backs'? Perfect!"

On 3rd August 1914, Germany declared war on France. The sirens announced general mobilisation to the whole country. But Daniel Brottier was not fit enough. Could he however remain indifferent in the face of such a national catastrophe? In the Mother House of the Holy Ghost Fathers in Paris, he had a very tough discussion with his neighbour Fr. Trilles. The above quoted text gives the gist. The corps of voluntary chaplains began to take shape. "That's a very good thing you are doing there, Father" said the Brother doorkeeper, "for you are not obliged to go to the front and risk your life, but you are going there all the same. God will protect you".

Daniel wrote to a nun, "I finalised my arrangements yesterday, and am on my way as a voluntary chaplain. In such miserable times, I have to make myself useful in whatever way I can. I know I have no need to recommend myself to the prayers of your dear community".

On 20th September 1914, he finally reached the war front in the Oise Valley. Many soldiers fell under the bursts of gunfire. They regarded their chaplain as their "living standard in the thick of battle". He carried them along with his ardent courage. He was never out of the front line, he crawled out to give first aid to the wounded, carrying them to safety on his back; he leaned over the dying, heard their last confidences, gave them God's pardon, pressed a cross to their lips, received their secret messages for their families, wives, mothers. He closed their eyes with a loving touch, buried them, stopped to pray over their graves, his heart full of an immense sorrow but also with an unconquerable hope, never forgetting to put some relic of them in his pocket to send back to their homes.

At Ypres, it was trench warfare. The infantrymen never surrendered. They were inspired by the example of their priest, crawling through the mud to carry back the wounded, being guided above all at night by the death rattles of the dying, in order to give them one last touch of courage, leading them on to peaceful deaths!

He said one day, "Take good care of my military cross. How many dying lips have been pressed to it! It has received the final sighs of so many little soldiers! How often has it touched their poor bullet-ridden chests, labouring for breath, torn to shreds, and I could say that if the cord of this cross

could be wrung out of the blood it has absorbed, it would turn the water it was dipped into totally red".

The personal relations he had with the soldiers and the officers, and the irresistible care he had for them, enabled him to call them back, one by one, to the practice of their religion. "My children, do not forget that tomorrow is Easter Sunday. In one hour I will give you all absolution, beginning with the commanding officer and the captains".

One day, a French officer lay gravely wounded inside the enemy lines. Fr. Brottier put a Red Cross flag on the end of a stick, advanced right up to the wounded man, dressed his torn flesh, loaded him onto a stretcher and dragged him back to safety. Not a single shot was fired from the German lines; a real miracle!

"They used to call me the lucky chaplain, saying that I had nine lives. It is true that all through the war I was often exposed to danger, but I was preserved from the most serious trouble as if by a perpetual miracle. I became reckless . . . My clothes were full of holes, torn to pieces. But I personally was never touched! I soon understood that this protection could only be from heaven and that it was given to me in view of a work or of a mission which I was meant to accomplish after the war . . . I had to do nothing but await the hour of God".

He brought back with him from the front the highest possible decorations but he would never speak of them. His modesty, like his bravery, was recognised by all. But on the quiet he would often say that if he had ever done anything special in his life, then it was during the war. Into the bargain,

he had a revulsion from the dying and the dead which was almost pathological. His daily experience of death literally knocked it out of him! In 1917 he founded the National Union of Combatants, to give the ex-soldiers aid after the war: its motto was "United as at the Front".

His love in action could occasionally be inventive. He got medals of the Sacred Heart made of cloth for the soldiers. He took photographs of the infantrymen to send back to their families. When the wounded had got better he gave them shirts and underpants which he had got from his benefactors.

Love is first and foremost compassion. The archives in Auteuil have twenty or so letters written from the front, in circumstances readily imaginable, to war-widows. They are all composed in a similar vein. "Everything becomes clear in the light of religion; one day all separation will cease; try and take your mind off things by being occupied in works of charity". One desperate mother asked the chaplain for details of her son's death: "I have no doubt", he replied, "that God met with his infinite mercy the soul of this valiant child who fell for his country". He wrote to one widow, "Have courage! Try to repeat this poor *fiat* (thy will be done), so difficult to say with sincerity". He revealed the delicacy of his own soul in writing to the wife of an officer, "Please, I beg you, simply tell me what you are suffering; my priestly heart is well used to it!" He sent home the wedding ring of a dead soldier, or a piece of paper soaked in his blood, a photograph of his grave. What grandeur of soul! "Love comes from God, and whoever loves is born of God" (1 John 4:7).

"Love has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Romans 5:5). Charity in its original meaning, in Greek *agape*, is the love of God bearing fruit in the love of men, a gift of Christ which lives in Him

and is practised in His name. Finally, in order to understand the true motive which inspired the charity of Daniel Brottier, we must refer to his interior mystique; the desire to sacrifice his life for Our Lord, and even, going further, his desire for a martyr's death at the service of charity, in Europe, since he could not have it in Africa.

All the same, he was not a Stoic hero: like everybody else he admitted to being scared. At heart he was an apostle full of tenderness and solicitude; he radiated the love of God which animated him, in his attitudes and words: he showed us a life which did not belong to himself. "My children, we must love not just with words and speech, but by action and truth" (1 John 3:18). Following the example of Jesus, Fr. Brottier offers himself to every apostle, man or woman, as a "living standard", the example of entire self-giving. "A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

Prayer

Dear Father Brottier,

It is the Spirit of Jesus who breathed such love into you. Together with you I ask him to breathe the same love into my own heart, so that in all circumstances I can be, in my turn, the servant of those men and women to whom I have been sent . . . with a heart "as great as yours"!

Day Five

PURIFICATION OF SPIRIT

"The military chaplains must make a retreat as soon as possible after demobilisation. I am beginning mine here in Germany, where, secluded in the camp, apart from all interference from the civil population, without any special preoccupations, I have leisure for meditation and silence. Jesus, my Lord and my God, it is for your glory and out of love for you that I am undertaking this retreat. Please unite my sacrifice with the one you offered on Calvary and which you still offer up every day on the sacred altar."

It is obvious that because of his availability for whatever God wanted of him, Daniel Brottier was able to carry around the silence of the cloister within him in the depths of his heart. And so, on 20th May 1919, a new chapter opened in his life.

In Paris once more, Fr. Brottier met again his illustrious and dear friend, Bishop Jalabert, who had come from Dakar to recruit new missionaries for Senegal after an absence from France of five years. And what a reunion it was! The bishop hastened to tell him all the latest news about the mission, and Daniel recounted the extraordinary adventures of the "lucky chaplain". He had seen so many soldiers and officers fallen, yet a bullet had gone through his great-coat without touching him; he was obviously the object of a miraculous protection, but thanks to whom and for what purpose he had no idea. There was a moment of silence. Bishop Jalabert opened his breviary and took out a double image of

St. Thérèse of the Infant Jesus; between the two pages lay a photograph of Daniel, with the words, "Little Sister, look after my Father Brottier". The bishop broke the silence. "She is the one who obtained the miracle of your protection".

Daniel wrote later, "These words were immediately an overwhelming revelation to me. It all meant that the work I was about to do was desired by Little Saint Thérèse". Together with Bishop Jalabert, he set about moving heaven and earth to get the necessary funds for the "African Memorial". The donors were generous, and the two venerable missionaries with their long white beards enjoyed enormous prestige everywhere they went. Father Brottier wrote to Bishop Jalabert, "I believe that if we really want to build at Dakar, which will become in a few years time one of the most beautiful commercial ports in the world, a monument worthy of the twin ideas of religion and patriotism, then we must move patiently, and be prepared for a long drawn-out affair, not working just to solve a few local problems, but to erect the cross on a pedestal which is to be handed down to posterity". Later he wrote, "Now, little subscription leaflets, it is time for you to be off! You carry messages of experience and charity! . . . You carry with you the blessing of the founder of this project".

The Bishop made his final visit to Rome, and then got ready for his return to Senegal, leaving behind him his ardent manager with all his lists of donors. On the evening of his departure, a terrible storm erupted over the whole of France. In the Gulf of Gascony navigation was perilous and the wind raged furiously. At three o'clock in the morning of 12th January, Jalabert's ship went straight to the bottom with a total of 463 drowned and only thirty-six survivors. The

bishop and all his missionaries disappeared below the waves. The only thing found on the beach of Soulac in Gironde was the sodden breviary of Bishop Jalabert with the plan of the African Memorial inside it. This came into the hands of Father Brottier, who considered it as a sacred trust to be carried out.

What a terrible ordeal . . . and what an immense sacrifice for Daniel! "Confidence and courage!" Daniel remembered these words of his friend: courage to face the events and losses of life; confidence to welcome the plans of God even when they disorient us! All through his correspondence of this time, there is a sense of being haunted by the past. He had just come back from a heroic adventure, and he had fallen into the platitudes of daily existence. His personality, it was said, ". . . cast a shadow over everybody he met"!

In addition, he was missing Africa, but the state of his health forbade any return there. He was overwhelmed with sadness. "What will become of me? What use am I to anybody? Am I not just a burden on people? Why does Our Lord seem so far away? What use am I even to him?" At the age of forty-four, these were the questions plaguing him and draining his moral energy. "Emotions become weaker, reality appears in all its starkness, the soul suffers . . . the years separate us from those we once knew . . . but the soul seeks in union with the divine will all the graces which will allow it to face up to life". Daniel was going through the dark night of the soul where everything he was and everything he did got thrown into question.

Nevertheless, his soul remained at peace, leaning as it did on the strength of the one who had sent him. "If I should walk in the valley of darkness, no evil would I fear: you are

there with your crook and your staff, with these you give me comfort" (Ps.23). In his night of the soul, Daniel knew that he was under the protection of God's crook and staff, and abandoned himself cost what it might to Providence. He wrote, "What should never happen at any price, is to have in oneself any anxiety against the confidence which we must have in Providence. After all, it is for the glory and for the interests of the Master that we are working; and if there are some tribulations and problems, let us not let them bother us."

"Do everything humanly possible that has to be done with prudence and let Providence look after the rest . . . In actual fact, what are we? Nothing but wisps of straw ready to be carried here and there by the breezes of the divine will".

The example of Fr. Brottier is certainly to the point for those engaged in the apostolate. Our Lord attaches us to his cross so that we can bear fruit in the mission with him. It is always important to take care of "the enlightened eyes of the mind" (Eph. 1:18) in order to discover in events the occasional providential ordeal. By welcoming it we leave ourselves at the disposition of God, in a truly humble attitude, following his own example. We live everything literally in his school.

Certainly, nobody is nearer to us than Jesus. He has shown this by his complete self-surrender in his Incarnation and the many gestures of love throughout his life. But he is also completely other. God is infinite, almighty, the Creator; we are only weak and miserable creatures. Each time that he comes a little nearer to anyone, night must first of all fall on that soul during which the Holy Spirit purifies it of its last worldly attachments in order to allow the Trinity to take up "its abode" in it (Jn. 14:23). It is of the utmost importance to

welcome this night in the certainty that it is a choice grace which will prepare the soul for a new invasion on the part of God.

Prayer

Dear Father Brottier,

I occasionally experience these indispensable purifications during my apostolic service and I know that they are valuable for me. I ask you to help me so that I can welcome them in faith and rest in confidence because I want to know how to live through them like you, full of fidelity to the Holy Spirit.

Day Six

UNITING CONTEMPLATION AND ACTION

On 21st November 1923 Fr. Brottier entered the Work for the Apprentice Orphans of Auteuil, for he had been named its director by his Superior General, Archbishop Le Roy. On 22nd he wrote, "I arrived in Auteuil yesterday, and the situation both moral and financial is satisfactory."

Why was he so euphoric, given that the organisation had only recently been confided to the Spiritans by the Archbishop of Paris because of its decline? Fr. Brottier himself answered the question in the *Auteuil Courrier*: "We are now at the end of November 1923. A new director has just arrived. He is of the opinion that the situation is worrying. But since his chiefs have sent him to a new battlefield, he will organise the fight to the best of his ability, trusting that Providence will suggest the ideas which will permit him to continue the work of his valiant predecessors . . . In forty-eight hours the thought came to him to construct a chapel more suitable for the project, and to dedicate it to Thérèse of the Child Jesus!" He had already promised to "render her particular gratitude"; and she was going to enter Auteuil hand in hand with him through the main gate . . . what happiness!

He sat down at his desk and wrote the following letter to the Mother Prioress of the Carmel of Lisieux:

FIFTEEN DAYS OF PRAYER WITH BLESSED DANIEL BROTTIER

Paris, 21 November 1923

Dear Reverend Mother,

I want to make sure that my first act, my first letter will be to the Carmel of Lisieux, for Blessed Thérèse of the Child Jesus. I have had a particular devotion to Blessed Thérèse. My intention, on arriving at Auteuil, is to place my dear orphans under her protection, and that is exactly what I am now doing. I would like to instal a beautiful statue to replace the present statue and I know a new statue is coming. But that is not sufficient. I have another idea which I want to place before you, seeking at the same time your advice.

The chapel we are now using is too small, is quite ugly and is not capable of serving as a chapel of ease for the large parish in which we are placed, because it is right in the middle of our buildings. I would like to construct a new one, giving out onto the road, spacious and beautiful, which could be used both by our orphans and parishioners living nearby, and I wish to dedicate it to Blessed Thérèse.

In fact it will be the first church dedicated to her within Paris . . . and I am convinced that Blessed Thérèse would love to look after my orphans, and receive in their presence the homage of the people of Paris, who could not fail to come in crowds to this sanctuary. She herself will make sure we receive the thousands of francs necessary for the realisation of this plan, she will be the mother of these poor orphans who have been confided to our care, and she will help us to prepare them for life by doing good to others and practising virtue. I dare to ask you to bring this our special intention to the feet of the dear little sister."

Here we have a mysterious meeting between Daniel Brottier and St. Thérèse. He would protect that in his heart, in his privileged relations with her. "For some time I have had a particular devotion to Blessed Thérèse." He got down to reading the *Story of a Soul*, in which Thérèse revealed her famous Little Way. But in addition, he learned about the story of her own soul, and he realised that what she lived in the contemplative life, while he himself was living in the crucible of an extremely active apostolic life. He also, like her, wished to be Love, deep down in the heart of the Church, his mother, and he also was full of daring and confidence, based on his relationship with his merciful Lord; for him as well, "only love matters!" But in the light of this life of Thérèse, so completely delivered over to God, he could see the gaps in his own life; he felt himself called by God to allow himself to be invaded by the same God. "Draw me on, Lord, draw me to you" he repeated after herself. What she had written in the little exercise books, which providentially had been confided to him to carry to Rome for her canonisation, all that was exactly what he felt in his apostolic heart, namely, the attraction to the inferno of love. "The more the fire of love embraces my heart, the more will souls be attracted to the Lord." Look how the apostle and the Carmelite, one active, the other contemplative, advanced together hand in hand. And she will take the whole apostolic work under her wing!

"I said to Saint Thérèse, that all of us who are her friends, were going to set about erecting as quickly as possible in Paris, the heart of France and of the world, the first church dedicated to her. I seemed to understand that she would like it to be completed in the very year of her canonisation . . . the first Mass therefore will be celebrated on the 25th December

next (1925) in the new chapel.” And that is just what happened . . . Meanwhile, Thérèse had every day sent the necessary funds and sustained Daniel both in his interior life as much as in his immense apostolate! “Maybe my boys do not pay sufficient attention to her but she is always involved with them. She will be their little mother”, he used to say with a smile on his face.

But Daniel Brottier had been practising interior contemplation even before his encounter with Thérèse. With Saint John, he could already say in the middle of his tornado of an apostolate, that “What we have contemplated about the Word of life, that is what we are announcing” (1 Jn. 1:1), and following St. Thomas Aquinas, that the apostolate is “*contemplata aliis tradere*”, namely, to give to others what one has contemplated. He was involved in a mystical way particularly with a Carmelite nun who came from St. Louis in Senegal (West Africa). He wrote to her, “ My consolation is to think that although I am struggling every day in the plain, that other hands are raised towards the mountain of a beloved Carmel, begging the Lord on behalf of the poor combatant . . . If the good God sends you a little heavy suffering, do not be overly surprised, because a lot is at stake in this struggle.”

His intimacy with Thérèse must have been crucial in the spiritual darkness preceding his entry into definitive habitual union with God, and was a providential grace confirming him in the life he was already living. All the giants of the apostolate were first and foremost great contemplatives. Ignatius of Loyola received his call from Christ in the little chapel where he stopped with his first companions on his way to Rome, and in an ecstasy where Christ even dictated to him the very name of the new Society.

Vincent de Paul, who if anyone deserved it, could be called super active, left to his nuns the duty of practising the highest contemplation.

The person I want to talk about now is called Mosca Da Selva. She was a sculptress from the north of Italy who looked on her amazing ability in the art of mosaic work as a means to a magnificent apostolate. When the question arose of putting a mosaic to Daniel Brottier on the pillar at the entrance to the basilica of Lisieux, she was the one chosen for the job. Starting one autumn, she spent every evening, despite the cold, alone for six months, in order to achieve her chef d'oeuvre, and in order to identify herself with the subject of her work, from whom she was convinced she had received the highest mystical graces. As a sign of the gifts she had obtained, she wrote discreetly under the mosaic, "at rest". Which means, that as far as apostles are concerned, they are first of all "at rest", in the mysterious work taking place in their hearts.

Prayer

Dear Father Brottier,

To myself also, through your intercession, in contemplation may this grace of the Holy Spirit be given, to be "at rest", in preparation for the marvelous fruits of the apostolate. However, more is the pity, I am all too ready to be swept into action on my own initiative, instead of welcoming the plan of God in the light of contemplation. I really must spend more time listening to the Word; for Martha has all her dignity, but it is "Mary who has chosen the better part", according to Our Lord (Lk. 10:42).

Day Seven

BE ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE

"We are well into the twentieth century, and still there are thousands of orphans, who, on arriving at the age for becoming apprentices, cannot prepare for the future, nor learn a trade which would shelter them always against a life of misery, and this is because no-one wants to get involved with boys of thirteen or fourteen, with all their faults and vices in embryo, and who have almost insatiable appetites: to sum up, they represent a wide open mouth unfit for anything . . . And so, reaching the age of fourteen and beyond, they are so often already most-abandoned souls. Now we have to get involved, we have to save such ones!" (Daniel Brottier).

Saint Paul wrote, "I have become all things to all men, in order to save some of them at whatever cost" (Rom. 11:32). One great quality an apostle has, is to be adaptable to people wherever he exercises his ministry. This ability is both a science and an art, particularly when one is dealing with the humblest people, taking into account their way of talking, having a relationship with them, and showing them respect, esteem and love. The apostle is most effective when he has something like a ray of light emanating from himself or herself. This is obviously shown in the name of Christ, by an attachment of the heart which shines out of their eyes. To

make oneself “all things to all people” implies therefore to utilise the great secret one has of transmitting the message by the means which are most fitting to captivate and convince.

From the very outset of his ministry of youth education, Daniel Brottier, both in France and in Senegal, was fully able to practice this, especially in being “all things to all people”, which made him so close to the youth of all ages, whatever their religion or social differences.

On becoming director of the Apprentice Orphans of Auteuil, he turned his attention and zeal to problem adolescents, those whom “nobody wanted”, street children left to themselves, who, under a facade of mistrust or revolt, hid a wounded heart; those who revenged themselves on society by acts of violence, who were unloved, rejected, who had no family to welcome them, both insecure in the present and full of anguish about the future!

Fr. Brottier said, “The first thing necessary is to welcome them, give them a roof, feed them, clothe them, but above all to teach them a trade which will allow them to fulfil themselves, not forgetting a serious moral formation, and a personal appeal to the values which are essential if they are to be fully human . . .” To the apprentices he said, “Become real men! That must be what you are aiming for, my children . . . What is a man? It is the person who knows what he wants, and who makes it happen, whatever the cost. It is the person who once and for all is fixed on an ideal, to achieve which nothing is too arduous as long as one is getting nearer to it . . .” and, to his collaborators, “In a work like ours, we must have great patience, and never make hasty decisions . . . Our work is full of trials, but only because Providence allows them, for it says in the Bible, ‘. . . there is no

redemption without the shedding of blood!'" (Heb. 9:22). Never be discouraged! It is a difficult job to educate children like ours, but the difficulties should not be exaggerated. Never be discouraged! In a work like ours, we must expect every day the worst possible catastrophes. In addition, the Devil is dogging our footsteps! But do the right thing and it will all work out by the grace of God! . . . with children, there are constantly ups and downs, and we should not be surprised at that, but keep marching on courageously. God will be generous with those who are going to save the poor children whom he loves, for we are taking his place in their eyes! We must treat them with extreme delicacy, and never cast up their origins to them."

In becoming "all things to all people", the helper has the privilege of being in a confidential relationship with the youngsters, despite the difficulties involved. Without such mutual confidence, Brottier does not see any meaningful education taking place. Without this mutual confidence, it is impossible to reach the depths of the heart, morally speaking, and the youngsters cannot be brought into contact with Jesus Christ. This necessary spirit of confidence comes about through simplicity in relations with the children, a sense of humour, and direct and meaningful dialogue. One must carry out diligently one's duties, one needs to be ready to work, to have virile energy, and obviously one must not be wanting in sympathetic affection!

Fr. Brottier cultivated the art of setting all this energy in motion, which enabled the problem adolescent to say, "I want to, and I can", thus aiding him to win out over the circumstances which would otherwise destroy him, initiating him into a creative sense of silence, and since he

could now listen to the interior mystery of his own personality, he was ready to meet "The Someone" living within him, loving him, accompanying him, supporting him in all his efforts . . . efforts bringing to him a new joy, giving him the ability to surpass himself, to be master of himself . . . all this which is nowadays called the value of fundamental autonomy, which makes one able to make free choices and be motivated.

All this took place in a community situation of *joie de vivre*, encouraged by sports and pastimes. And, without neglecting the findings of modern human sciences, the Holy Spirit played his part in putting the adolescent back up on his feet, the adolescent who until now had been injured by the violence of a previous situation. All this pedagogy poured out of the heart of Daniel Brottier in a great act of faith in the injured child, so far distant from the pessimism of certain contemporary psychologists!

The value of relationships, so destroyed by previous experiences, could once again flower, cultivated by the part played by Daniel's benevolence, seeing the positive hidden in each person, hidden even from the child himself. The first thing the child had to learn was to love himself, to sense himself as lovable to others, and only then could he learn to love once again. Fr. Brottier was an ardent promoter of communal games, of music, public gymnastic displays, of anything which would add to the joy of the teenagers, and give them confidence in each other, and the precious experience of friendship.

Teenagers try to make sense of existence, and demand transparency and authenticity. The great questions of life flood over them in confusion: to succeed in life, or to make a success of one's life? Where do I find the thread of Ariane,

love, in the maze of hatreds and divisions? How do I liberate myself from what enslaves me personally? The adolescent may be young physically, but inside he is much more "developed"! Daniel Brottier kept repeating, "Give me three years in which to accomplish the miracle."

And above all, there was the constant prayer of the apostle, holding steadfast against all winds and tides, for nothing is as changeable as a teenager. This aptitude to make oneself all things to all men at the end of the day owes its existence to a gift of the Holy Spirit . . .

Prayer

Dear Father Brottier,

Your example incites me in the apostolate in which I find myself, to make myself all things to all people, by continually adapting to the needs of persons, and by having an ardent faith in Him who sustains me with his grace. Obtain for me from Our Lord, the grace of being his docile instrument for the realisation of his eternal project of love for those he has confided to me . . .

Day Eight

FOR THE GLORY OF THE MASTER

"What must on no account ever happen, is for us to harbour any concern contrary to the confidence which we ought to have in Providence. After all, it is for the glory and the interests of the Master that we are working, and if there are tribulations and problems, let us not be troubled about them.

Eternity is not far away now. What happiness to arrive there after a day's work spent for the greater glory of the Master! This thought alone is enough to take over our lives and make them tend more and more towards heaven" (Daniel Brottier).

The expression, "to the glory of the Master" often appears in Daniel's letters, and that was what he gave "priority" to as a faithful servant.

"To serve means no longer living for oneself alone, but sacrificing oneself for the happiness of others out of a love for God." And that is what it means when the apostle gives "priority to the glory of the Master", namely, sacrificing oneself for the good of others out of the love one has for God. "To serve means to have no longer any rights, but only duties: it means to have no concern for one's own interests, but to think, desire and act as a servant of others."

Such is the ideal of an apostle: to be completely at the service of men and women who are confided into his care by the Master so that they in their turn may more fully

correspond with his will for them, and so contribute to his greater glory. Could there be a more beautiful life on earth? And that is where the apostle finds his own happiness. Daniel Brottier gave the example of his own life, when he wrote about how he filled his day in Auteuil:

“What do we do all day from morning to night? Well, we welcome people who are suffering, we encourage them, assist them, offer them hope; we collect orphans, dress them, feed them, give them a bed, shelter them from destitution, educate them, catechise them in order to make good Christians out of them; we act as intermediaries for young men and women in search of work; we contact the civil, military or religious authorities in order to obtain help for families or individuals in need; we talk to and guide souls which are uncertain or in anguish and do not know which way to turn; we visit the sick, console them, reconcile them to God. We pray ourselves and make our children pray about the thousand and one miseries we have got to know; we help everybody who asks, more often the rich than the poor in actual fact: and what is all this, surely nothing but the perpetual exercise of love? . . . Love is the queen of all the virtues and the virtue which above all makes us holy . . . we have chosen the better part, or rather God has chosen it for us and we must continually thank him for that. Is this life of the apostolate not the very one which Our Lord himself chose to lead? Into the bargain, is living the same way as Christ did, not in actual fact the real road to perfection?”

Nothing could stop Fr. Brottier when it was a matter of something capable of adding to “the glory of the Master”. We see him writing articles in the great Parisian newspapers, organising a concert in the Madeleine, or a show in the

Trocadero, scattering pamphlets and posters at the doors of churches, and even managing to get massive charming images of St. Thérèse put up in the Paris Metro, side by side with film stars “not always to be recommended” as he said himself. The heart of all this immense activity was his interior life, which St. Paul defined as “a life hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3).

“When the supernatural becomes second nature to you, then you have a true interior life, for how is it that from so many works based on great organisation, little fruit is harvested? It is because what is essential is lacking. Of course there are hands, feet, a head, many languages and points of view. But the heart of a work is the interior life. When that is missing, how can the work succeed?

I am only seeking the glory of God . . . I am happy so long as God is content and souls are being saved! I am not in any way working for myself” (Daniel Brottier).

From then on, Daniel Brottier was attached to nothing but the glory of God, and because of that he was able to radiate the infinite tenderness with which God wishes to meet those who have been marked with misfortune. For God had spent a long time preparing the heart of this saint in order to reveal through him his own love for the miserable. Right from when Fr. Brottier started at Auteuil on 21st November 1923, he lived inside himself a definitive union with God, marked on his part by a total abandonment to God’s glory: “I said my Mass this morning for the orphans of Auteuil. I offered myself to serve them right until my dying day”.

Each morning, the time free for prayer allowed him to repeat this total offering on his part, so that all his thoughts, words and actions of the day might be oriented to the glory

of the one who loved him first. At night, the Blessed Sacrament was prudently kept in a strongbox hidden in a cupboard in the sacristy. Daniel Brottier met his Master close to this cupboard, and in his own depths. The half opened door on to the altar allowed him to see the statue of St. Thérèse above it. He was convinced that she also came down among her own; as for himself, his heart belonged completely to the one who had seduced him first, and he kept himself in his presence by means of a deep recollection which nobody could disturb. Then he would bring the Blessed Sacrament to the altar “full of love, like a mother carrying her child”, as the daily attendants at his Mass reported, and “he gave the impression of being in total union with God who transported him outside the things of this earth.”

Throughout the day he practised “practical union with God” (following the words of Fr. Libermann), in order to express that apostolic action is lived out starting first of all from the Guest who is living within oneself and for his glory. Daniel Brottier, completely oriented as he was towards the service of others, received thus inspiration and reaped a harvest thanks to Him whom he met frequently in the depths of his heart. This is the way he loved men with the heart of God.

His close daily collaborator, Pichon, could testify in a beautiful book, that Daniel’s sole objective was to hold himself continually in the presence of God, “... in such a way that his words, thoughts, actions, in fact everything he did, were dictated by Christ with whom he was united intimately”. He also wrote, “Those who had the honour of living close to Fr. Brottier were always struck by his great concern when there was any question of the rights of God”.

In another place Pichon wrote, "The happy associates of Daniel could read his soul as if it were an open book. The Spirit of Jesus was reflected there as in a pure mirror. They loved to see him at prayer. That was when they clearly understood what was meant by a soul always united to God, a spirit turned continually towards God. In those moments of prayer he did not seem to belong to this earth. He practised in his own life what St. Paul wrote when he said, 'Let your conversation be in heaven'. And when he came back down from those heights known to the Apostle and to all the saints, enthusiasm shone out from his transfigured soul. People knew he was turning throughout the day in love to God by the frequent ejaculatory prayers which escaped from his lips and were heard by those who were on his wavelength. The remarkable fact is that his love of God was so particularly intense that he would have wished to win over the whole world if that were possible to the service of his Master. This total control by Christ of a human existence had already been proclaimed by St. Paul when he wrote, 'It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me!'"

Prayer

Dear Father Brottier,

The Holy Spirit did wonderful things in your apostolic heart. Ask him for me so that I may orient all my apostolic activity to "the glory of the Master", so that I may belong to him totally, that he may freely act in me, and so that like you I may bear much fruit.

Day Nine

SPIRITUAL POVERTY

Daniel Brottier said, “God hits without pity on all that is human in us, in order thus to lead us to the great light in which everything is harmony and truth, where souls are beside themselves with delight and meet together in Him, in order to proclaim that He is the Master, that He alone is great, and that everything finds its reason in Him . . .

. . . A person is lost through pride! A man therefore must force himself to stay in the shade. All the merit of a good action rests in the fact that nobody realises it has actually been performed . . .

. . . The greater the deeds, the humbler must we feel! The less we are concerned with ourselves, the greater the life!”

In these pithy phrases, we see that Daniel Brottier is at one with the great anonymous crowd throughout history who have been poor and humble, and particularly with all those in the Bible who at the time of the Babylonian Captivity were known as “the *anawim*”, God’s little ones.

The *anawim* are those men and women who expect everything only from the Lord God . . . the poor of Yahweh, who keep hoping no matter what happens, even against hope itself. John the Baptist was one such: “He must increase, I must decrease” (Jn. 3:30), he said, speaking of the Messiah. “The Lord has looked on my condition of being *anawim*”, sang Mary in her Magnificat. She herself is at the head of the

Christian people when she cries out, “the Lord has done great things for me, because I was only his little servant” (Lk. 1:48).

Finally, Jesus made spiritual poverty the first of the Beatitudes, underlining to those present that whoever has the heart of the poor in spirit is already in possession of the kingdom of heaven. When his first apostles relied too heavily on their own efforts, he left them in their confusion, repeating that “without Me you can do nothing” (Jn. 15:5). St. Paul concluded, “When I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10).

Throughout the history of the Church, the true apostles of the Lord, in whichever circumstances they found themselves, were the poor in spirit. It is just in order to reach spiritual poverty, that they embraced material poverty. We remember Benedict, Clare, Francis of Assisi; Lady Poverty was for them the door opening to poverty of the heart. And how they served the poor! Daniel Brottier himself could become the apostle of the poor because he had the heart of the poor, illuminated by the poverty of his life. It is particularly moving to hear his cry rising out of the certitude of being loved by God, while all the while God was calling his apostle to partake of the cross, to accompany Him on the road of love, Heart speaking to heart.

It is in this spirit, that “the Father of the Poor” as he was henceforth to be called, let out his cry from the heart in favour of his unhappy children. “Open them the door, give them bread, provide work for them, make men, Christians out of them!” “If you could only see them continually arriving at my door, coming into our house, such miserable children, you would not hesitate for an instant: open them

this door!" In the magazine, *La France Illustrée*, he gave many examples of orphans in distress, each time with the same response, "I had to tell them there was no room left for them here!" At nightfall a poor child arrived, alone, frightened: his father was dead, his mother who had remarried was dead, and his stepfather was a drunkard who beat him. Alas. No room! No room! "I tell you, if you only knew how my priestly heart is torn at the inability to alleviate such suffering, or to offer a welcome to such pitiable children, none of whom have done anything to deserve such a fate!" The whole of Paris was moved by the grave words of the "beggar of love", of the Orphanage of Auteuil. Donations poured in; in 1927, the number of children doubled!

Daniel wrote, "Whoever gives to the poor is giving a loan to God. It is surely a good and certain thing to have God Himself as your debtor. A loyal person honours their debts. All the more reason then for Jesus to honour his. Take out a mortgage with God. Then, when you appear in front of him, you will have the happiness of being able to say to him, 'Lord, I gave alms for you. I now dare to ask you to keep your promises'. God will certainly reimburse you up above, and even possibly here below as well!"

1934 was the year of the general strike, of social stagnation. Daniel continued nevertheless to knock at the door of every heart in France. He himself pushed poverty to the limits in his own lifestyle, but it was apostolic in its severity: everything was being undertaken for the sake of the mission. He wrote, "My intention is to develop and enlarge my works of charity . . . and fill France with my orphanages . . ." Alas sickness put paid to that . . . the fabulous project never saw the light of day . . .

Finally, the spiritually poor man is he who places his total confidence in God. Confidence is actually hope in action. It is founded on the infinite mercy of the Lord. It leaves God to worry about the success or lack of success of a project, but takes care nevertheless to make the most of the hand one has been dealt.

Daniel said, "It is very amusing to see so many people filled with curiosity about the secret of my success, who say that of course it is all very easy for me for I only have to ask St. Thérèse and she gives me all I need! But my secret is otherwise, namely, 'God helps those who help themselves'. You are my witness, that my secret involved spending twelve years in working day and night, unremittingly and relentlessly; and also involving everybody who considered themselves friends of Auteuil, priests, nuns, even the orphans themselves, in twelve years of unremitting and persevering prayer! Now, you have the secret, and there is no other way . . .

. . . In a word, we are trying with all our heart to make our children forget that they are alone and abandoned in the midst of life; we are creating a place of welcome for them . . . our motto is 'always have confidence'. (From an interview for the daily newspaper, *L'Echo de Paris*, given to the journalist Jean Nohain in 1919). One of the most famous pithy sayings of Fr. Brottier is the one which bases everything on confidence: "You cannot have too much confidence in God who is so good and merciful. You receive exactly in proportion to the amount you expect."

Confidence is the way man is able to force God's hand. God's greatest happiness is to see a person having confidence in his merciful love. "Always have confidence" was Fr. Brottier's motto in all his undertakings: confidence in Him

who called him to serve unhappy children, confidence in Thérèse, who never let him down, whether materially or spiritually: "Where other saints fail, Thérèse passes on conquering" he said. He had confidence in his collaborators, confidence in his generous donors, confidence especially in his orphans. That was how he was able to construct "the big, beautiful basilica" of Thérèse at Auteuil, and that of the African Memorial in Dakar, even though all the while he was opening new orphanages.

In actual fact, confidence is the real virtue of the apostle, who rests his weakness on the strength of God. It is the exact opposite of the original sin, which dared to try to put hands on God. It means rejoicing instead that He has laid His hand on us, a hand so mercifully tender, where happiness blossoms out in truth.

Prayer

Dear Father Brottier,

I am always full of wonder when I contemplate this spirit of poverty and confidence which you showed. Yours was based on a profound intimacy with the living God. I feel today the weight of an apparent total indifference to the things of God all around me. I need your confidence and poverty of spirit, so that I can sow "the word of hope", as Pope John Paul II said. I know I can succeed following your example and through your prayers and through your prayers for me.

TEAMWORK

Daniel Brottier wrote, “Our daily life here involves a thousand detailed moments where characters meet and collide, even with the best of intentions. It is necessary to separate what is worth keeping and leave the rest - but the rest is an almost necessary constituent of daily life, and in any case it is inevitable that there will be imperfections and things that are awry . . . A leader, whoever he may be, will never be able to succeed without the aid of intelligent and tirelessly committed collaborators . . . He must be able not only to use the good qualities people have, but even to make use of their faults . . . The essential thing in collaboration is mutual confidence, together with sincerity and self-forgetfulness.”

To know how to collaborate with the men and women that Divine Providence has called to the same mission as ourselves, is one of the great apostolic qualities. The true mark of a Christian work is this sign: “See how they love one another!” On the contrary, where there is constant mutual criticism, where dissension is rife, where there is a general feeling of silent discontent, there is then created an atmosphere of suspicion, enthusiasm is extinguished and the action of the Holy Spirit is forestalled.

To accept differences, and be united for action, brings forth a communal atmosphere of joy and ardour for the work in hand. In the apostle, it supposes much humility and simplicity, allowing each man and woman involved in the work to blossom, according to the qualities each individual possesses, and to give the best of themselves. When added to that there is delicacy of heart, consideration and plenty of humour, and when the apostolic zeal is nourished in common prayer to the Holy Spirit, its source, then there is real Church community, where, according to Scripture, "each one builds up the other together in love".

This is what Fr. Brottier had the great happiness to live out in his life, as much as with his immediate collaborators, as at another remove, with all the personnel of the Work of Auteuil. His real community consisted of what humourists referred to as the "Trinity". Frs. Pichon and Despons assisted him in his daily work, the one mainly involved in formation through catechesis and in the Auteuil magazine, the other performing ministry in the confessional and taking the youngsters for spiritual advice. The three of them were former military chaplains, of very different characters, but their souls were melded together by their common love of Our Lord and of the children in need. Fr. Brottier took great delight in this Trinity. He wrote, "What a great grace we have received from God! May we always remain friends, taking the greatest care that nothing comes to tear this unity of hearts and minds: that is where our power lies, our joy, and that is the reason for the fruitfulness of our apostolate among our children. It is also one of the most certain sources of the blessing of God on this mission".

Two personal letters reveal the lengths which Daniel Brottier went to in showing courtesy, the great care he had for making others feel important, a thing so necessary for fraternal unity, and his deep affection for people. The first letter was written to Fr. Pichon, who was laid up due to overwork, and because of a certain mistake on his part which Daniel took great care not to mention. It is dated 17th February 1933. "I had a feeling things would turn out this way. The first thing is to get you back on your feet. Let your good friends look after you well. Do not worry about anything. Things will work out fine here: and in a few weeks it will all be forgotten. *Missions* (this is the title of the magazine which caused all the trouble) has not yet been completely sorted out: it is really a great big bird slowly stretching its wings: the flight will be all the more beautiful for that! So there! Forget about the matter! Everything will work out fine. Kindest regards from everybody here". What delicacy in applying soothing balm to the personal wound! This is the greatest example of the spirit of collaboration which Fr. Brottier possessed.

In August of the very same year, he sent feast day greetings to the other chaplain who was on holiday. Daniel Brottier always found time to send birthday and feast day greetings! This letter cannot be bettered as an example of his friendship: "My state of health does not permit me to write a long letter so I must be rather brief. In these short lines you can find all that my priestly heart, and the heart of a true friend feels the need to say on the occasion of your feast day . . . And now, have a good rest. Afterwards you can meet us all again and we will continue together an apostolate so visibly blessed . . . Providence is pushing us to keep forging ahead and

together, our two hearts united, we will carry out what the good Lord is asking of us."

There were some very well known lay people among his men and women collaborators. First of all there was an engineer who worked in a polytechnic college. Daniel had met him during the war, and said of him, ". . . conversion made another man of him". This engineer was called M. Mouillier and he sacrificed his career in order to stay close to Daniel. Nowadays we would call Fr. Brottier his spiritual director. Another remarkable collaborator was a religious who was known by the friendly nickname of Fr. David. He was at the service of the orphanages for fully forty years as prefect of discipline and administrator. He never got a penny for all he did and lived a very poor life in the orbit of his illustrious friend. At his funeral Mass Fr. Brottier enumerated his virtues, admired by everyone: "His name will remain in all our memories as the purest and most perfect symbol of the collaboration which could be brought to such an enterprise of love".

Many women offered their charitable help when sales of work, or information to the Press were needed, or any other needful chores. Fr. Brottier had the gift of drawing them round himself and like St. Vincent de Paul, of inspiring in them the happiness to be found in serving the poor. Two of these women, on the other hand became his permanent associates; they were Misses Dingeon and Renée Bigot. They spent their whole lives devoted to the work, and were in fact female CEO's before their time. The former spent twenty-five years making known the African Memorial of Dakar. The latter was the director, and a most competent one, of the Country Home, an institution created by Daniel Brottier to prepare and help problem youngsters to get placements with

farming families throughout France. He got on really well with these associates.

Prayer

Dear Father Brottier,

Our Lord favoured you with a marvelous spirit of fraternal collaboration. Ask him on my behalf, ask on behalf of the Church, for this profound union of hearts and minds among all the apostolic workers who devote themselves to the most diverse works. Jesus taught us a lesson when he asked his Father for unity among all his followers, and this unity is first of all a gift from God and only then the result of human efforts. May his grace obtain this for us through your intercession!

Day Eleven

TRUST IN PROVIDENCE

In the words of Daniel Brottier, “Providence will intervene in your favour insofar as you deserve it . . . You must never doubt Providence, but pray and act. That way you can move mountains . . . You must not rush Providence. Often, you do not understand completely why something has happened, but one day you will realise that Providence has been acting for the best . . . When something does not work out as expected, you must wait for a time and let Providence act at its own pace . . . If you do not know which way to turn, ask Providence for a sign. When you are asking God for something which will help you to serve Him better, it is rare for you not to receive it, but it all depends of course on the sincerity of the request.”

“We have believed in the Love of God for us” (1 Jn. 4:16). When you go to the source of the apostolic dynamism of Daniel Brottier, you finally come of necessity to a stop at his faith in the Love of God: the certitude of being loved by Him; the certitude that he is constantly present in our lives; the certitude that he knows everything concerning his apostle; the certitude that he looks after all the events of our existence; the certitude that everybody is loved by Him in the same way and called to share in His own happiness.

In actual fact, this Love of God at work in our lives is called divine Providence; the ideal of the apostle is therefore to

surrender himself fully to this Providence, in the assurance that this is the real road to holiness and to real apostolic fruitfulness. It is a merciful Love, because it knows our weakness and forgives our faults; it is a considerate Love, which goes on ahead of our necessities which are the seeds of eternity. The secret of Daniel Brottier was clear to the eyes of everyone who got near to him: it was his certitude in the beneficent presence of divine Providence in all his work and in all of his life! And so we must have confidence in God and sometimes learn how to wait: "It will happen in God's good time" he used to say.

His audacity and his moral strength appeared sometimes beyond belief to those around him, if they did not realise his profound faith in divine Providence. He depended on it for everything: "How good it is to be God's instrument!" he would say. And, in every circumstance, he hastened to thank Providence, even in adversity: "God has tested us for our own good, and we could have been tried even further were it not for Him". His closest collaborators recognised that he was able to welcome whatever God decided because of his habitual interior union with God . . . then he would launch the enterprise and go into action full of confidence!

Daniel Brottier loved to say to everybody that it was Providence which conducted the work of Auteuil. He refused to accept any congratulations and whenever someone wanted to acclaim him he would disappear. "Look here, we think sometimes that all the success is due to us; but that is not the case at all, for it is God who has made the achievement possible. Of course he expects us to play our part, but as soon as he sees us making a little effort, he intervenes and organises everything . . . I have in my safe a

sum of money sufficient to keep the wolf from the door . . . if for example, I was suddenly to disappear . . . But I would not wish to have any other financial security . . . as long as we can say to God, 'I have welcomed these unhappy children out of love for you, help me now to raise them', we can be certain that Providence will play its part. If I ever dared to proportion the admissions to the amount of money available, I would surely be in for an unpleasant surprise".

During the construction of the basilica, Daniel used to receive every day a cheque for a thousand francs from Thérèse through a wellwisher. He could not keep count of such financial interventions from the Saint whom he considered as his agent before the throne of God. He wrote, "The time has come to reveal the spiritual closeness which exists between our work for the orphans of Auteuil and the holy Carmelite of Lisieux. At the very moment when I could no longer depend on human help, Providence extended its saving arm. And the name of Providence is Thérèse of Lisieux".

This submission to Providence of course did not prevent him from following the normal human ways of prudence. He was bold but not rash, he proceeded with intelligence and skill, and thus he remains a living example of that happy alliance between the human and the divine where the faculties of a man, under the guidance of God, are exercised in full liberty, for contrary to what is commonly thought, the action of God makes human liberty blossom.

Fr. Brottier certainly did work hard, surrounded by excellent men and women collaborators. "God helps those who help themselves". He left nothing to chance. One witness reported, "If he acted in a way which seemed beyond the

bounds of reason, it is only because what was reasonable to him was different to what it was for us. God was the life and soul of all his activity; you could feel that even if he did not say it".

He certainly consulted others and collected all the information he could. His religious superiors, even when they were alarmed at the range of his projects, always had confidence that he would succeed in the end because they knew his native prudence. One joker remarked, "You've certainly had some luck!" But Daniel replied, "My luck consisted in working as hard as possible, writing thousands of letters, continually trying out new initiatives, always being where I was needed most, and being ceaselessly on the lookout for new opportunities". He used to laughingly insist that his inkwell had brought him in more than twenty-five million francs and that if anybody wanted a relic of him after he died, they should take his penholder because it had worked so hard for the homeless children of Auteuil (and that is just what happened).

This profound faith in divine Providence, together with his great wisdom and his immense capacity for hard work and taking initiatives, remains an example for the apostle of today. For Our Lord continues to call to all sorts of ministries those men and women who are full of confidence in his merciful love, and who are ready to put into effect everything needed to carry out projects of love on behalf of His children in need. To all those apostolic men and women, he accords his most privileged graces so that in faithful alliance with his love, and in their generous fidelity, they can in their turn bear much fruit.

Prayer

Dear Father Brottier,

I fully understand the message you have for me today, namely, that abandonment to divine Providence is the secret of the profound happiness of the apostle. This road, marked out by a response of authentic love to the love of "The one who has loved us first" (1 Jn. 4:19), I wish to follow in the same joy and in the same enthusiasm which were yours. Thank-you for asking for this on my behalf.

Day Twelve

LOVING SERVICE

"I am able to disappear for days on end and I can leave everything without too much worry, for by now I have created a network of friendship and of dedication all around the Orphans of Auteuil which I think is indestructible. If only people knew how much love there is in the hearts of the French people, they would kneel down in respect before them. I am often taken to be rash but my recklessness, I assure you, is actually timidity when I consider how much support I receive, how much encouragement, over and above what I have asked for" (to Fr. Pichon, 1935).

Throughout the history of the Church, great apostolic men and women have known how to ask insistently for prayers from those who are nearest to them, in order to assure the success of the work at hand, and it is a surprise to us to realise the importance they attached to those intercessions. The first one to act like that was St. Paul who wrote in the letter to the Romans, "I beg you, by Our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Holy Spirit, to take part in the combat with me through the prayers which you address to God on my behalf" (Rom. 15:30).

In this way, drawing along with himself, by his example and his zeal, other persons in the service of those in greatest need through disinterested love, the apostle fully responds to the grace which invited him in the first place and which is

making him holy. He calls upon the love of others in order to unite it to his own, so that greater success can be achieved. "The communal service of love" then is that which the apostle prefers so that other men and women can collaborate with him by their prayers and by the offering of their lives. "Widen the scope of charity" was what Pope Pius XI said to Fr. Brottier on the occasion of his visit to Rome. Daniel knew how to surround himself with an army of Good Samaritans, who by their prayers, sacrifices and personal generosity, actually widened the span of the tent which covered his work at Auteuil.

Through his use of the press and of his personal correspondence, the "Beggar of Love" carried in his wake thousands of people who thus were able to take part with him in the same apostolic adventure. When Daniel arrived at Auteuil in 1923, he found a list of twelve thousand benefactors on his desk. Twelve years later, at his death, the list contained a hundred and fifty thousand names . . . This mighty throng of friends were attached to his own person and to the care of the homeless, in every undertaking. It was a wonderful investment, because up until today the chain has still held. "Each of my initiatives was met by our friends of Auteuil with such an overwhelming effusion of generosity that I have often been struck dumb in admiration and gratitude before it" said Daniel.

Daniel often gave voice to his thoughts, saying that this legion of "praying benefactors" actually constituted the heart of Auteuil; it guaranteed the circulation of life in the entire community. "The Mission of Auteuil is like an iceberg. There is a part of it which is visible, such as the young people in the various houses with their men and women teachers. But

there is another part which is even more important, invisible though it be, comprising the thousands of friends who in the communion of saints represent an enormous force of prayer and intercession which is the real reason for our unbelievable success!" Thus, the mystery of Auteuil is solved. "Dear friends, who I feel are so profoundly attached to our great work, more than ever I have confidence in you".

Joined to this flood of intercessors on earth, was the long list of saints in heaven. By the communion of saints - a dogma to which Daniel was in fact greatly attached - the saints in heaven are also taking part in our apostolic work, and it only requires us to tell them about it. "Do you think that the saints in heaven have lost their memory? That would be a strange thing indeed! Very much to the contrary, they know our needs more than we do ourselves. In addition, when they were alive here on earth, they would have got down on their hands and knees in order to help us. How then can we have any doubts that they will help us now?

"Believe me, it is those who are dead who are leading the living. We think we are acting all by ourselves but in reality we are being led by this great crowd of intercessors and friends that we have in heaven . . . Whenever I wanted to spread the news about Auteuil, I always confided in the Holy Souls. As a matter of principle, I send out our newsletter every year on All Souls Day, 2nd November, entrusting the success of my efforts to our dear dead ones. I have never regretted it".

His great belief in the Communion of Saints, brings us to the mysterious solidarity which exists between human beings and Christ. It also calls to mind the idea of co-redemption in union with Him through the sacrificial

offering of love. Daniel Brottier kept his own counsel on this matter; but we know that he received letters from people of modest circumstances in which they promised to offer up their suffering in union with Christ for the good of Auteuil and for its extension. It was Fr. Pichon, the friend of Fr. Brottier, who wrote his first biography. In it he states that the ability of Daniel to elicit such generosity from the hearts of the humble was at one and the same time a proof of his delicacy combined with his audacity. That is how the saints are! Without fully realising it, they draw after them by their holiness many men and women whom grace disposes to this mysterious collaboration. This “communal service of love” can even lead to such people offering their very lives as a sacrifice, just as Christ did, and that is how certain apostolic works meet with great success.

“Dear Friends of Auteuil, can we not conclude that your pity for human suffering and especially for that of the most unfortunate people namely orphan children, and the common desire to bring them relief is the very thing which calls forth your ever more generous attitude regarding Auteuil?”

Finally, among the most faithful friends associated with this common service of love, there were those men and women who came to Fr. Brottier’s little office in order to hand their gifts to him personally, and above all to speak heart to heart with him about their profound attachment to him and to his work for homeless youth. Between the apostle who had completely given himself to Our Lord and these generous people there was a great sense of trust, worthy of the lay collaborators of the first apostles.

“It is necessary to see these good friends of our community, such a multitude of visitors in continuous lines during the

long afternoons, despite the inclemency of the weather, in rain, storms, mud and cold, in order to comprehend their undying loyalty to the children of Auteuil."

Prayer

Dear Father Brottier,

You knew how to gather round yourself and round our work at Auteuil a network of other apostles, who by their prayers, the offering of their lives, and occasional gifts became your precious collaborators. Your example leads me in turn to welcome into the apostolic task entrusted to me, fervent and generous persons who can join their zeal to mine for the "communal service of Love". Help me, I beg you, to carry this out every day of my life.

Day Thirteen

DOCILITY TO THE SPIRIT

“Whenever I have to take a decision, I pray, I am convinced that God will help me, and when I speak, I really speak in his presence . . . Always be the kind of person who delivers himself up to the love of his God, in every detail of his daily actions, and who undertakes everything for this love”.

One of the most beautiful modern documents coming from the Church's *Magisterium* must be the encyclical *Evangelii nuntiandi*, on the evangelisation of peoples, promulgated at the end of the synod of bishops which studied the same theme. Pope Paul VI ended the encyclical with these words: "We can say that the Holy Spirit is the main mover behind evangelisation: it is he who prompts each person to announce the Gospel, and he is the one who, in the depths of each person's conscience, makes him accept and understand the word of salvation. We exhort all preachers of the Gospel, no matter whether they be bishops, priests, male or female religious, or laity, to pray ceaselessly to the Holy Spirit with faith and fervour, and to allow themselves prudently to be guided by him, as the decisive inspirer of their plans, initiatives, and of their whole evangelical activity."

Jesus said, "You will receive power from the Holy Spirit and you will be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). You will be my witnesses, he means, insofar as you are filled with my Spirit. My Spirit, actively present in you, will put the words into

your mouths, the expressions into your eyes, the attitudes in your behaviour, which will allow the Spirit already present in those you are speaking to, to liberate them and turn them into children of God. In actual fact, the great beginning of evangelisation took place on the morning of Pentecost, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, and in the presence and under the supervision of Mary.

How necessary it is to live habitually under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in such a way, that with a single movement, he can both make us grow in Christ and in addition turn us permanently into his apostles . . . for the more I am united to Christ, the more am I an apostle, and the more I am an apostle, the more the fulness of Christ can grow in me. How then are we to go about making sure we give the Holy Spirit every chance to work in us? How are we to spread and turn our sails to catch his gentle breeze? The answer is obvious: by being habitually aware of the presence of God in us and by being continually present to ourselves, through the total gift of oneself, making sure we keep a constant attitude of gentleness, confidence and peace.

Daniel Brottier did not walk along this road at the beginning. He was still young when he wrote a letter to his master of novices which springs from an attitude of wanting to do everything by his own efforts, which was typical of his natural energy. "I know I will have to do a lot to earn this great grace (that of martyrdom). Above all I will have to get down to acquiring the humility I lack and we will achieve this together, for if I follow your advice to the letter everything will work out fine". It looks very much as if he saw holiness as something to be attained all by himself! On the contrary, of course, sanctity is something we gratefully

receive. It presumes an interior attitude of spiritual poverty, a return to the situation where we allow the Holy Spirit to take the reins over our lives. Fr. Lallement says in his famous book, *The Spiritual Life*, that we must "cross the threshold" and allow full control over our lives to the Spirit of Pentecost, with the help of Mary. Daniel was indeed generous and he rapidly crossed this threshold during his years of ministry in Senegal. His physical suffering, his humiliations, his occasional failures brought him to the interior attitude of humility and confidence which were to be characteristic of him for the rest of his life. This "handing over of himself to the guidance of the Holy Spirit" (a frequent expression of Fr. Libermann, the spiritual father of the Spiritans) had already led him, even before his entry into Auteuil, into a definitive habitual union with God.

The Archbishop of Paris, Cardinal Verdier, used to come discreetly sometimes to have breakfast with Daniel. He would be looking for some wise advice before making an important decision. He said, "Whenever I came into Fr. Brottier's company, he always seemed to be surrounded by a halo of light". When Daniel could not give the Archbishop an immediate reply, he would say, "Leave it with me, and see what light tomorrow brings to the matter".

When Daniel was being beatified, the question arose of finding an expression which was typical of his holiness, and the one chosen was, "To think of God means nothing more than not keeping the least detail of our daily life separate from him" . . . and this formula sums up perfectly the presence of the Spirit of God in his apostolic activity. The fruits were easy to see. For example, one day he said to a young woman whose parents were anxious to get her

married off at all costs, "My child, stay calm. Your vocation is not to be married, and I am telling you what is clear to me. Nor are you called to the religious life. You are invited by God to carry out a beautiful apostolate in the world and you will do much more good there than you would if you became a nun, because that is not for you." And in fact that is how things turned out.

He saw a grief stricken woman in his chapel, full of tears, and he whispered in her ear, "My child, go back home. Keep calm. We are going to pray to little Thérèse for you, so have confidence. But go back to your house immediately for a child lies there waiting for you". The woman had come to pray for her youngster who was at death's door; when she returned home the infant was better.

He could listen to people at great length. His patience was extraordinary. He remarked in confidence to someone, "One day I did great damage by not listening sufficiently to a person who had come to see me, and I was very impatient with her. From that day on I have always promised God never to act like that again". This patience was a manifestation of the living presence of the Holy Spirit in him. "I have just received a woman who kept on talking for half an hour without a pause. I just had to sit there listening to her problems, and I said absolutely nothing. Do you know what she said to me, when she was on the point of leaving? 'O Father, what a pleasure it was talking to you. Your words did me no end of good.' And so you see now how easy it is to be of service to someone in trouble. Let them talk, be sympathetic, show friendship; most of the time it takes nothing more than that to set a soul once more on the right road!" And again he said, "Friendship is the most perfect of

all human sentiments, because it is the freest, the purest and the deepest of them. What a rare and divine thing friendship is. It is the reciprocal sharing of two thoughts, two wills, two virtues. Friendship is the forgetfulness of yourself for the good of someone else. One of the purest ways of becoming happy here on earth is to make others happy!"

Prayer

Dear Father Brottier,

Thank-you for showing me the road to true happiness. Thank-you for teaching me so clearly how to be docile to the influence of the Holy Spirit. Help me to hand over my life completely to his divine influence, so that the fruits of his love may be manifest in my life and in my apostolate.

Day Fourteen

RADIATING GOODNESS

*"I would love to write a book on the art of being good!"
If we look randomly at the words and writings of Fr.
Brottier, we find many maxims of his on this subject,
which are like a map of his proverbial goodness.*

"Goodness means giving yourself without limits . . . In order to be good you must know how to have pity".

"Goodness expands the heart and opens it to become a refuge for people in all kinds of suffering. To be good is to know how to immerse yourself in the details of peoples' lives . . . And great effort is demanded before we reach the stage of always being able to avoid getting angry . . . Goodness means being master of yourself. You have to observe difficult situations with tranquillity . . . To be good means to continually be of an even temper, above all when you are giving orders. You have to know how to be good, while all the time remaining strong, just, decisive and precise . . . "

"If you are of a lively temperament, being good makes you become calm, and with calm you become strong. Often I am strongest when I say nothing at all . . . People think that I do not see what is going on . . . I do, but I wait for the proper moment to arrive before speaking. In order to command well, you have to be willing if necessary to do the thing yourself".

Lacordaire said, "Goodness is what makes us most like God . . . nothing worthwhile has ever been done for anybody

if goodness has been absent, or if goodness was not at hand in any undertaking". It is very true that if each of us thinks back on his past life, the people who have influenced us most are those who have been good to us in our eyes. Every apostle needs to have as his ideal to be "the reflection of God's goodness" (Wisdom 7:26). Constant goodness particularly towards the littlest and humblest people presupposes a presence of God and a presence to oneself, in both cases almost permanent. It is only realised after a long period of training in which the apostle learns to allow himself "to be led by the Spirit of God". Goodness is not a departure point, but a terminus. It is the sign of a privileged relationship with the Holy Spirit who is its source. Those who have this type of goodness show it forth as a dazzling pearl of great beauty. The apostle who radiates this goodness will be a source of astonishing light to others.

Saints are models for the rest of us. Daniel Brottier revealed a love of humanity in his daily relationships with people and he drew it from the heart of God. He constantly dealt with the young as well as the old, showing a noble kind of courtesy, great consideration for peoples' feelings and exquisite politeness to all. Fr. Duval was his second successor in Auteuil, and during the process for Daniel's beatification, he testified as follows: "The love of his neighbour was so remarkable that at Auteuil we always called him 'The Good Daniel'. That was how he was referred to by those of us in daily contact with him and who are witnesses of his untiring devotion to the children of Auteuil".

Fr. Brottier took very seriously the preparation of the children for their First Holy Communion, following the example of his illustrious predecessor Fr. Roussel. Four times

a year a group of thirty to fifty or even more street children would arrive at Auteuil, and for three months they would be taught reading, writing, arithmetic and above all everything about the love of Jesus for them. Fr. Brottier enjoyed this work; the rest of the staff referred to the new arrivals as "the well off", but he called them "the lightning conductors of Auteuil" because he often asked for their innocent prayers for its success. He was full of joy on the day of their First Communion, and would say to each one, "Are you happy?" or, "Do you realise that God Himself is now within you?" To give an even better example of his goodness, the day came when one of these "sparrows of Paris" escaped from his home, and he was only brought back with great difficulty. He was immediately taken to see Fr. Brottier who was having a conversation in the courtyard of Auteuil. Instinctively, the little gentleman put up his arms to ward off the expected slap in the face but the priest drew him gently under his cloak, the little heart beating wildly all the time. When the child had ceased to be afraid, the saint opened his cape a little, smiling all the while at the "tamed sparrow"! There is now a statue of the incident at Auteuil, for the action thus portrayed was really typical of the goodness of Daniel Brottier!

He was continually at his desk meeting great numbers of people who had come to ask for financial help, advice, spiritual counsel, persons from every social class. The poorest and the wealthiest found him creating a network of charity all round himself, all the while introducing those who could give help to those who needed it most. "If you only knew the numbers of sad people coming to my office! Here we have a poorly clothed woman who seems to have to come for some money, and in actual fact she is bringing a

large donation under her apron. On the other hand, there is somebody else, well dressed, with all the appearance of having servants and property, and here she is to ask for financial assistance. So I end up giving the gift of the former to the latter."

He regarded it as indispensable to be always available in his office. He was ready to meet whoever needed his help during the course of the day, collaborators, workers, the orphans, but also both rich and humble benefactors of Auteuil; and then those of every station in life begging for help, who perhaps to their shame had fallen on hard times, widows, priests, religious, bishops . . . during his free time he attended to his immense amount of post, or composed numerous articles to make his work better known through the Press. "It is by work and hardly ever leaving my desk, that I have earned my success. I scarcely move a muscle, but like the captain of a ship who gives the orders from the bridge, everybody knows I am there, and that is where my great strength lies. I do not think the President has such a lot of correspondence as I have, and he certainly does not spend as much time as I do answering it". He showed himself most generous to those in greatest need, ". . . paying particular attention to tramps, and even more to ex-soldiers who were now reduced to sleeping on the streets".

The notice on his office door read, "Enter without knocking!" One day a visitor did just that and surprised him in the act of consoling a child who was in tears. He seemed devastated, for the sufferings of the child were breaking his heart! In the Bible it says that the mark of the Holy Spirit is to be gentle and strong at the same time. Daniel Brottier showed forth a calm strength, and never at any time

committed an indelicacy or seemed angry. "He was goodness itself, and that is how he kept calm so well". But you could often see in his face the effort he was making to stay even-tempered, especially when someone came to bother him at the end of a long day. His face would turn purple, just like St. Francis de Sales' did in similar circumstances, but like the saint he showed outwardly no sign of animosity. This was all the fruit of his long struggle to allow the Holy Spirit "... to lead him in all his ways . . ."

Prayer

Dear Father Brottier,

What a lesson for the kind of apostle which I wish to be! I can easily see that your radiation of goodness was the work of the Holy Spirit, building on a long line of sacrifices, occasional failures, continually starting all over again . . . You also, like so many other saints, allowed yourself to be invaded little by little, in the course of the years, always in peace, in confidence and in the strength which came from God. That is exactly what I am asking from you today, and I am sure my prayer will be heard, so that I too can become little by little "... the reflection of the goodness of God".

Day Fifteen

THE CROSS AND THE GLORY

"Penitence is the great permanent necessity which we must never for a minute abandon, and which we must take absolutely seriously . . . Let us offer it all to Christ crowned with thorns, waiting patiently to meet him again throughout everlasting eternities, we, that is, who have sacrificed all in order to follow him. Our afflictions should be generously borne in this difficult life in order to be reunited with this Supreme Good."

"Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory?" (Lk. 24:26). Jesus spoke these words to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus on the evening of his resurrection, while he was walking with them on the road and explaining to them everything in the Scriptures concerning himself. In addition, he said in another place, "The disciple is not greater than his master" (Mt. 10:24-25).

This "was it not necessary", in the sense of an absolute necessity, links suffering to the glory of the cross. The apostle is thus called by Our Lord to carry his cross with him, literally to drag his own cross behind that of the Master, even to the extent of joining himself to Jesus on his cross of redemption ". . . achieving with him the work of redeeming fallen man". St. Paul wrote, "I complete what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for his body which is the Church" (Col. 1:24). Of course nothing really is lacking in the sufferings of Christ in order to realise the work of our redemption, but it

is his mysterious love which goes so far as to invite privileged disciples to take part with him in his very crucifixion for the salvation of the world. In this sense, the Christian becomes a co-redeemer with Christ. This is a beautiful love story which is understood by those who live it out in their own lives.

Fr. Brottier's superior general, Archbishop le Hunsec, said, "It is to the redounding merit of Fr. Brottier that he achieved all he did in spite of terrible headaches", which were the result of contracting typhoid fever when he was twelve years old, an illness which was never fully cured and which left him weak during the time of his studies and got worse with the burdens and worries of his apostolate. If anyone mentioned the pain he invariably answered, "The boiler is close to bursting"; or "I have a bad old head and it has to be borne with". He also said, "A person needs to know how to suffer, to wear his crown of thorns . . . Nothing ever happens without God wanting it to". He used, even abused, aspirin, sometimes. When he had an important meeting after lunch, he used to pour a whole tube, ten aspirin tablets, into his soup. He was sometimes surprised by his friends sitting at his desk, his head in his hands, weeping copiously: ". . . a real crown of thorns." It was this invisible stigmata which kept him in the state of being a co-redeemer with the suffering Christ. Nobody ever heard him complaining about it.

His mental sufferings were even more burdensome. Through jealousy, that scourge of human relationships, he was accused publicly of using the donations he received for his own purposes, and of soliciting money in a very indiscreet way out of mere greed. He took the trouble to explain everything in the *Auteuil Courrier* and in articles in

the Press, but the lies never let up. Luckily, the Archbishop of Paris always defended and encouraged him.

But over and above these humiliations which never affected his person and for which he thanked his crucified Lord, his greatest source of affliction was the inability to accept into Auteuil all the young people who were in such distress. "The doctors are trying to find the reason for my illness, but if they knew the people in pain who knocked continually at my door, and my inability to give relief to all of them, they would know what is tearing me apart nowadays". How often he sobbed for very frustration in the solitude of his sleepless nights! It was a sorrow which cut him to the bone . . . The pain of those children wandering aimlessly, of the teenagers whom nobody wants, broke the loving heart of Fr. Brottier, the tender "compassionate Christ".

"If anyone cuts open my heart, they will find there an orphan and the cathedral of Dakar . . . ". Of course, the cathedral of Dakar - the African Memorial - was finally complete. The consecration had been fixed for 2nd February 1936, a Marian and a missionary feast. Cardinal Verdier himself was named as Papal Legate. All January, Daniel was busy sending out official invitations to those ladies and gentlemen who were to board the steamer specially chartered for the occasion. But Daniel felt himself getting weaker; would he, who had done more than anybody else for the African Memorial, be able for the journey? Out of obedience he consulted his superior general, Archbishop le Hunsec, at the instigation of his doctor, in order to know clearly the will of God. The answer was unambiguous: ". . . his state of health does not allow him to leave France".

Daniel said, "Thank-you very much, doctor, now I can remain amongst my children".

On 2nd February he celebrated in Auteuil a Mass of Thanksgiving in the presence of the benefactors of the African Memorial and among his dear orphans, who, knowing how disappointed he was, had secretly organised a surprise party for him. On the occasion he was overwhelmed and addressed a message to them which because of its lyricism needs no comment. "My children, words fail me to express my gratitude to you for this great surprise you have given me this morning. I am deeply affected. This private family feast makes me happier than if I had followed the Cardinal to Dakar. I tell you, children, that I always find my happiness in your presence, and you are the ones who give it to me . . . And if I had known twenty-five years ago when I started working for the African Memorial, that I would be spending the day of consecration here with you, it would have been recompense enough. While we are on the subject of Dakar, let me say that I never for a moment thought of doing it all out of vainglory. We have to see in all that happened the hand of God who so arranged events that everything fell into place at the proper moment, and for His greater glory. That is why, as long as we have breath within us, we should continually be blessing God, and we will sing of the mercies of God for all eternity afterwards".

Later he said, "I finally collapsed on the 2nd February, the day when Simeon said his *Nunc Dimitis* (Now let your servant go in peace, Lord). Soon I will be in heaven chanting the praises of God". Afterwards there would be found in his breviary a picture of Our Lady, on the back of which there was a "*A prayer to Mary in case one finds oneself dying alone*".

Daniel died alone on 28th February 1936, at four o'clock in the morning, in the Hospital of St. Joseph, where he had been brought on the 15th. Mary immediately introduced him into the presence of God to enjoy the eternal vision face to face. He was buried in "his" chapel of St. Thérèse at Auteuil. He was beatified by Pope John Paul II on 25th November 1984.

Prayer

Dear Father Brottier,

Praying with you today about your close association with the cross of Jesus and your sharing in his glory, my heart is full of gratitude for the great joy of being able to walk with you along the road of your marvellous apostolic life.

I entrust myself to you as well as all those men and women whom Our Lord entrusts to me in my own apostolate, and also all those who will read this book, so that in following you we may correspond fully with the plan of the eternal love of God for each of us. May God Our Father be forever glorified!

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3 5282 00658 0826



*Bl. Daniel Brottier CSSp, former army chaplain,
Director of Auteuil Homes for homeless youth.*

Father Daniel Brottier, beatified by Pope John Paul II is a wonderful hero of modern times. He was a Spiritan missionary in Senegal and then a chaplain at the Front during the First World War. Thanks to the name he earned for himself there, he was able to touch the hearts of millions of French people to subscribe to his orphanages in Paris, France, and to build the African Memorial, a wonderful cathedral, a tribute to all the French who died in World War I. His love and the ingenuity he showed in securing assistance for his thousands of abandoned troubled youngsters is legendary, and makes him truly an apostolic example for our day.



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